

NEWS

FROM YOUR MUSEUM

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

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RICH FIND OF INDIAN RELICS

"Digging up history" has a literal, and not merely an academic sense in Ontario. Two years ago archaeologists of the Royal Ontario Museum greatly enriched the records of Huronia as Champlain found that region, when their excavations recovered Huron skeletons, pottery, pipes, beads and other relics from diggings near Orillia identified as the site of the populous Huron centre Cahiague, which was described by the great French explorer.

Another triumph for researchers in archaeology has rewarded work under the direction of Mr. K. E. Kidd, ethnologist of the Museum staff. This summer, excavation of the site of another Huron settlement ten miles west of Midland, on the east shore of Nottawasaga Bay, was completed in six weeks of intensive effort. Results, said Mr. Kidd, were very satisfactory. Large numbers of Huron Indian bones were retrieved from the dust of centuries. They reveal much concerning the physique of those Hurons, and about the diseases that afflicted them. In addition to the human remains substantial quantities of glass and shell beads were found, a few objects of iron which are of great interest, and one smoking pipe made of stone. As in previous research of this kind, the Indian bones and relics are being carefully studied for a detailed report in due course. Visitors to the Huronia Gallery of the Museum will find hundreds of objects unearthed in these Ontario excavations.

AN OCTOBER BIRD IDYLL

A downy woodpecker, a scolding bluejay, and a cardinal perched at the same time on a sumach bush in its red finery of autumn, was an October idyll recorded by a Toronto bird observer. "On Thanksgiving Day a year or so ago," he writes, "I saw a bird picture I will never forget. There was a sprinkling of snow on the ground, and in a suburban garden, a sumach bush was brilliant with scarlet leaves. While admiring it, a downy woodpecker and a noisy bluejay alighted on the tips of two of its branches only a foot or so apart. Then, while I held my breath, a cardinal appeared from nowhere and perched on the same fiery tree. All three birds remained there for a full minute to make a scene of almost incredible beauty."

That is truly a sight to treasure in memory. Bluejays and downy woodpeckers are familiar enough, and it is good news to learn that the gorgeous cardinal is taking up permanent residence in other parts of southern Ontario besides the Western Lake Erie region where it has been common for years. These lovely birds and brilliant whistlers are frequently seen all the year round in suburban Toronto. James L. Baillie, of the Division of Birds, Royal Ontario Museum, would be grateful for news of the first appearance of the cardinal in any region of Ontario.

JAPANESE SKETCHES IN MUSEUM DISPLAY

Four sketch-books and forty-seven sketches depicting life in the Japan of well over a century ago feature a special display at the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology throughout October. They are the work of Katsushika Hokusai, a famous Japanese artist who was born in 1760 and died in 1849. Three techniques of the artist are illustrated in the collection—pen and ink, and ink wash with or without added color. Subjects treated include a "David and Goliath" counterpart from Japanese mythology as depicted by the superb technical skill of Hokusai; a number of Japanese warriors as they appeared before the introduction of Western ideas robbed them of the picturesque, and many other sketches of scenes and animals reflecting life in Old Japan. This showing of the work of "Hokusai the Incomparable," as a critic of his own country described him, has been arranged in the Special Exhibition Gallery of the Museum.

WESTERN DUCKS VISIT ONTARIO IN OCTOBER

Flying eastward with the sunset on their wings, flocks of ducks in south-western Ontario make admiring eyes gaze skyward these autumn evenings. And they bring hunters from every part of the province and over the border to the lagoons and marshes of the Lake Erie shore line. They are ducks from Western Canada making a stop-over in Ontario on their way to winter quarters farther south. Baldpates, green-wing teal, redheads and canvas-backs will be among them. This province is honored by the Fall visit of the ducks because of an odd detour many of the prairie-bred birds make in their southward migration. Leaving their breeding and feeding grounds in the remoter regions of the Western plains they first fly due south, then turn eastward abruptly through Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, to make a call in southern Ontario. From here their course is south-east to the coastal marshlands of the Carolinas, where they winter.

With the exception of locally reared black ducks, surprisingly few Ontario-bred birds are found in the Erie shore areas. Why? Ornithologists of the Royal Ontario Museum (where a great collection of ducks is exhibited) have been making scientific surveys of Ontario bird life for 25 years; and they have an explanation: There are not enough nice, muddy duck ponds in the northern wilds of Ontario to encourage ducks to raise bigger and better families. Most of the lakes there are clear, cold basins in the pre-Cambrian rocks. Ducks prefer mud, and they find the mud they love on the prairies.

UNUSUAL X-RAY PICTURES

A baby leopard that died in captivity, Indian bones from recent Ontario excavations and showing signs of disease, the skull of a wild boar, dinosaur bones 60 million years old—these were some of the unusual subjects for x-ray examination made during research for the Royal Ontario Museum in recent months.

